



Meat Grading & Certification Branch

## **Certification of Portion Weights and Dimensions**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this instruction is to provide Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) agents guidelines for certifying the weight, thickness and shape of portioned red meat products.

### **Procedures**

#### General

Processors shall supply AMS agents with a copy of the contract prior to production. The contract shall specify the portion weight, thickness and/or shape of the product to be certified, as applicable. The contract may also include applicable tolerances, sampling criteria and defects. If tolerances, sampling criteria and defects are not included in the contract, then the procedures and specifications outlined in this instruction shall be used to certify product.

#### Scales

All scales must be calibrated by a licensed scale technician every 30 days.

#### Sampling Guidelines

Products shall be randomly examined after packaging and packing into a shipping container. Sampling plans shall be in accordance with MGC Instruction 605, Sample Plan Preparation and Recordkeeping.

#### Portion Weights, Thickness and Shape<sup>1</sup>

For assistance in specifying weight, see weight ranges tables. Unless other portion weight/thickness tolerances are specified by the purchaser, the following tables shall be used. When both weight and thickness are specified, it is recommended that those requirements be limited to items that are mechanically pressed and/or sliced.

## PORTION THICKNESS TOLERANCES

Specified Thickness	Thickness Tolerance	Thickness Uniformity
1 inch (25 mm) or less	+/- 3/16 inch (5 mm)	3/16 inch (5 mm)
More than 1 inch (25 mm)	+/- 1/4 inch (6 mm)	1/4 inch (6 mm)

## PORTION WEIGHT TOLERANCES

Specified Weight	Weight Tolerance	Thickness Uniformity
Less than 6 oz. (170 g)	+/- 1/4 oz. (7g)	3/16 inch (5mm)
6.0 (170 g) to 12.0 oz. (340 g)	+/- 1/2 oz. (14g)	1/4 inch (6m)
12.01 (341g) to 24 oz. (680 g)	+/- 3/4 oz. (21g)	3/8 inch (9mm)
24.01 oz. (681g) or more	+/- 1 oz. (28g)	1/2 inch (13mm)

<sup>1</sup>Thickness measurements not applicable within 1/4 inch (6 mm) of edge. Also, value listed under thickness uniformity is the maximum allowable difference between the thinnest and thickest measurement of an individual chop or steak. Unless otherwise specified, the shape of whole muscle portion cuts shall resemble the approximate shape relative to the cut of origin. Cubed and braising steaks which are mechanically pressed and sliced shall be uniform in shape. Unless otherwise specified, patties shall be round.

## STATIONARY SAMPLING PLAN<sup>2</sup> FOR PORTION SIZED ITEMS

Acceptable Quality Level (AQL)			
Lot Size (Pounds)	Sample Size (Number of Sample Units)	6.5	
		Accepted	Rejected
500 or less	20	3	4
501 to 1,200	32	5	6
1,201 to 3,200	50	7	8
3,201 to 10,000	80	10	11
10,001 or more	125	14	15

<sup>2</sup>When sampling is performed on items that are packed in containers, no more than 10 portion-cut units from one container may be included in the sample.

**STATIONARY LOT SAMPLING PLAN<sup>3</sup>  
FOR PORTION SIZED ITEMS  
REEXAMINATION**

Acceptable Quality Level (AQL)			
Lot Size (Pounds)	Sample Size (Number of Sample Units)	6.5	
		Accepted	Rejected
500 or less	20	1	2
501 to 1,200	32	3	4
1,201 to 3,200	50	5	6
3,201 to 10,000	80	8	9
10,001 or more	125	12	13

**Defects**

101 Sample unit weighs outside tolerance.

102 Specified thickness of portion cut not within tolerance.

103 Specified dimensions (e.g. diameter, length, and width) of portion cut not within .05 inch (13mm).

<sup>3</sup>When sampling is performed on items that are packed in containers, no more than 10 portion-cut sample units from one container may be included in the sample.

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